

REPORT OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held by kind permission of the Royal Irish Academy at its headquarters at 19 Dawson Street, Dublin, on Tuesday, March 16th, 1948, at 7.45 p.m. The decision of the Council to delay this meeting until Spring was justified by an excellent attendance both of town and country members. Mr. J. A. K. Meldrum, the outgoing President, was in the chair.

The minutes of the previous year's meeting having been taken as read and duly signed, the Secretary read the Council's Report for 1947.

Council Report for 1947

Meetings

The Council met on five occasions during the year. The first meeting was held in February in Dublin and was attended by 8 members. The second meeting was also held in Dublin on 21st April. There were 9 members present. The Council next met in June in Portlaoighise on the occasion of the Annual Excursion and the attendance was 5. The two further meetings were held in Dublin, in September and December and there were 5 and 7 members present.

Membership

During the year 12 Associate members and 3 Grade II members were enrolled. We lost through lapsing, resignations and deaths four Associate members, one Grade 1 member and three Grade II members. There are now 88 Associate, 29 Grade I and 66 Grade II members. Our Associate membership continues to expand satisfactorily. Our technical membership, on the other hand, remains static or tends to fall. There is a notable falling off in the number of applications from technical foresters and this is indeed to be regretted. The Society was founded by foresters and cannot thrive unless it continues to win their support. The Council has given a great deal of consideration to this problem. Many of our foundation members had fallen away and, but for the growing number of Associates joining our ranks the Society would be in a bad way. The Council feel that the difficulties experienced by foresters in attending the functions of the Society during the emergency may have resulted in many losing interest. In order to encourage old

members to rejoin the Council has decided that any member in arrears who has not received any benefits from the Society in the way of Journals, etc. can rejoin by paying the current subscription. We look forward to a greatly increased technical membership in the present year and ask everyone to do all possible to enlist support for the Society. In view of the growing strength of our Associate membership the Council decided at a meeting that the time had come to give them a greater say in the affairs of the Society. A sub-committee was set up to deal with this question. The Resolutions listed to appear on the agenda of the Sixth Annual General Meeting are the outcome.

Finance

The abstract of Accounts for 1947 has been sent out to all members. Our income from all sources amounted to £155 19s. 0d., our outgoings to £79 0s. 5d. Our Society has a credit balance on hands of £188 13s. 4d. We must, when viewing this healthy credit balance, remember that we received £30 in donations and further that the bill for £48 11s. 7d. for Vol. IV, No. 1 of the Journal was not received in time to be included in the account for 1947.

Journal

Two issues of the Journal, Vol. III, No. 2 and Vol. IV, No. 1 were published during the period under review. The standard of the Journal is being maintained and the Editor is to be congratulated on its production. The cost of printing has risen sharply and the cost of producing two issues of the Journal yearly promises to be a heavy burden on the Society. It will be necessary to try to offset increasing costs by increased sales of Journals and advertising space, and better still by increasing our membership.

Excursion

A very successful three-day excursion was held in Portlaoighise district in June, 1947. Visits were paid to the State properties in Emo, Garryhinch, Durrow, Baunreagh, to the gardens of the Jesuit Fathers at Emo and to the estate of Lord de Vesci at Abbeyleix. An enjoyable forestry film show was put on for members by the Portlaoighise Branch of the Irish Film Society.

Another successful "local" excursion was held in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, on Saturday, 18th October. Mr. T. Walsh, Curator of the Gardens, welcomed the members and conducted the party round. The excursion included a

visit to the Augustine Henry Forest Tree Herbarium, and Mrs. A. Henry gave members an account of the work of compilation, etc.

The Council wish to express their appreciation of the kindness of the Minister for Lands and of private owners for permitting the Society to inspect their woods. Special thanks are due to the forestry officials concerned for their assistance in connection with the Portlaoighise excursion and to Mr. J. Brown of De Vesce estate for his help and guidance on the occasion of the visit to Abbeyleix.

Library Scheme

The arrangements made for the loan of books from the Central Students' Library continue in operation. The demand for books has fallen off considerably however and the Secretary is anxious to discover the reason. A list of suitable books is being prepared for circulation and it should encourage members to make use of the facilities offered by this scheme.

Tree Registration

There is little progress to report under this heading and the Council again appeals to members to send in information about remarkable and rare trees.

On the motion of Mr. T. McCarthy seconded by Mr. Denny Deasy, the Report was adopted.

Abstract of Accounts

The Secretary dealt with the Abstract of Accounts and its adoption proposed by Mr. McNamara and seconded by Mr. McGlynn, was carried unanimously. The meeting then heard the President's address.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is customary for the outgoing President to deliver a valedictory address reviewing matters during the past year which may have some bearing on Forestry.

Two noteworthy events occurred during the year under review. Last month saw a change of Government in this country. Our new rulers are pledged to a programme of economy in public expenditure so we may expect the economy axe to be wielded in various directions. It is to be

hoped that the importance to this country of having adequate resources of timber within its own borders will not be overlooked. If this be realised it is to be hoped that much needed afforestation will not be unduly curbed through lack of sufficient funds.

The other outstanding event was the fifth Commonwealth Forestry Conference which was held in London from the 16th June to the 19th July last year.

Discussions at this Conference covered all aspects of forestry and forestry problems. Many of the conclusions reached, and of the Resolutions adopted, merit close attention in this country though it does not follow that all of the courses recommended would necessarily be possible of adoption.

There is not sufficient time at my disposal to recount all the recommendations that were made so I shall confine myself to those which have particular application to conditions here.

Referring to Land Utilisation and Forest Policy it was stated: "The soil is man's major form of capital and improper land use and erosion strike at the very roots of man's economic structure, resulting in loss of water, timber, fuel, grazing and food itself." It was stressed that forest policy had often been looked upon as the policy of a Department whereas it should be regarded as an integral part of the general land policy of Governments. The study of soil conservation, mainly in the field, has clearly shown that soil erosion and degradation are far more widespread than generally supposed. Unless steps are taken to prevent the destruction of forests and faulty methods of agriculture and pasturage, the disastrous effects of land deterioration will be aggravated and become increasingly difficult to check.

In this country there is a widespread tendency of agriculture to encroach upon the forest and to monopolise the marginal types of land which can more profitably be utilised for the growing of timber and should be so used in the national interest.

There is a very close parallel between the devastation of the forests in Great Britain and in this country as a result of two world wars. Two thirds of the timber standing in 1939, equivalent to 45 to 50 years normal annual increment, were felled between 1939 and 1945, mainly in private forests. It should now be clear to all that this nation can no longer afford to neglect woodlands or to allow land suited for timber growing to be left lying relatively unproductive.

The technique of afforestation and rehabilitation of woodlands has greatly improved in Great Britain in the past twenty-five years and the delegates to the Conference were given an opportunity of seeing what had been done in those

fields of endeavour. Planting in sods upturned by ploughs has largely replaced notch planting or pitting-and-planting with satisfactory results. Beating-up had been overdone in the past but is now being carried out more intelligently. It is still necessary to weed systematically until the plants are well established but costs have been very considerably reduced as a result of the new planting methods adopted. Much that has been done in Great Britain could be copied here with great advantage.

Discussions on Forest Practice centred mainly, as may be expected, on the subject of spacing and thinning. One of the South African delegates startled the Conference by describing how that country had broken away from the European tradition of close spacing and gradual opening of the canopy. The species chosen were the rapid growing exotics, *Pinus radiata* and *Pinus patula*. Wide spacing and heavy, early and repeated thinning, especially on poor sites, combined with pruning in the still vigorous crown are essential. The rule for thinning was to limit the number of stems per acre to the quotient of a predetermined constant divided by the average height of the trees in feet. This seems to herald the advent of the mathematician into the realm of the silviculturist. The method may be worthy of trial here on a limited scale on better class sites with such fast growing species as Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce. Although there was a great deal of disagreement with this procedure which has proved successful in South Africa, yet there was a consensus of agreement on the growing of species in mixture in order to improve the soil and it would appear that the practice of growing timber in pure blocks is largely being discarded.

To turn to home matters it is very gratifying to note that imports of softwoods are now being received in fair quantities though not yet on the scale of the pre-war years. These imports are most welcome as they relieve the strain on our sorely tried woods. It is a matter for satisfaction to see that our native softwoods which were being consumed at a rate of more than 250,000 cubic feet standing per month are now being used at not more than 25,000 to 40,000 cubic feet standing per month.

The fuel crisis of a year ago precipitated an inordinately heavy cutting of hardwoods and it is to be feared that much timber of commercial quality was sacrificed in this way. Now that coal imports are once more being resumed on a considerable scale our woods may look for some relief.

This Society will always be interested in the activities of other bodies who have trees as their main object of interest. Although not allied to afforestation but nevertheless devoted to the growth of trees, it is gratifying to see the

progress made by the Irish Roadside Tree Association. The beautifying of our roads by planting suitable trees is a form of activity which should commend itself to a Forestry Society. They are particularly to be congratulated on their recent publication "Roadside Trees in Town and Country" which has been circulated to members of this Society. I trust I shall not be accused of abusing my position to state on your behalf that they carry our good wishes with them.

And now I must thank you for the confidence you reposed in me by electing me your President a year ago. I have greatly appreciated the honour and will conclude by wishing my successor, Mr. O'Beirne, a successful period of office.

Election of Council

The meeting formally confirmed the election of the new Council, as given on page 2. The incoming President, Mr. O'Beirne, then took the chair and paid a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor.

Excursion, 1948

Mr. McEvoy proposed that the annual excursion be held in the Sligo district, an area of remarkable natural beauty, most unusual geological and topographical features. The proposition was seconded by Mr. McMahon and accepted unanimously.

Mrs. Henry's Gift

The motion "that the best thanks of the Society are due to Mrs. A. Henry for her very generous gift of £25 to the Society for the promotion of popular forestry education" was proposed by Mr. O'Beirne. He referred to Mrs. Henry's long and close association with her distinguished husband in his life-work and he was certain that both their names would go down in forest history. By her work on the Augustine Henry Herbarium Irish forestry was heavily in her debt and this latest contribution increased that debt. Mr. Mooney in seconding the motion recalled that last year he had the honour of proposing Mrs. Henry for honorary membership and felt the difficulty of dealing adequately with her numerous helps to foresters and forestry. The motion was adopted with prolonged acclamation.

Amendment in Constitution and Rules

Mr. FitzPatrick proposed on behalf of the Council a group

of motions amending the Constitution and Rules. He recalled that our Constitution was based on that of a professional foresters' society in Great Britain where two types of societies exist. Our Society was a compromise between these two types, having both technical and associate members in almost equal proportions. The time had now come when we should allow our Associates a say in the government of the Society.

The effect of the amendments was to give Associates the right to nominate and vote in Council elections and to have two representatives on the Council. The motions were as follows :—

Article VII : Omit "Technical" in paragraph 2. Omit last paragraph in its entirety.

Article X : Omit "Technical" right through paragraph on top of page 4.

Article XIV : Omit "Technical" right through.

Article XI : At the end of first paragraph after "Grade II" add "and two Associate members."

Change paragraph 2 to read : Each of the eight elected members shall hold office for two years after election and the senior Associate member shall retire at 31st December each year but shall be eligible for re-election.

Rule 4 : Omit "Technical" all through.

Rule 12 : Omit "Technical."

Mr. Mangan seconded these motions which were adopted unanimously.

Mr. FitzPatrick then proposed two further motions sponsored by the Council :

I. To facilitate the work of Committees of Council, Rule 13 to be revised as follows : In paragraph 3 delete the clause "but with power to co-opt service."

Insert after paragraph 4 a paragraph to read as follows : "All Committees shall have power to co-opt from time to time as they deem necessary any members of the Society whose special knowledge would be of service."

- II. To allow for greater freedom in making arrangements for the Annual General Meeting, the first sentence in Article XIII be revised to read: "The Annual General Meeting of the Society shall be held in the early part of the year, on a date and at a place to be determined by the Council."

Both these resolutions, also seconded by Mr. Mangan, were carried. These Constitutional changes will require to be confirmed at the next Annual General Meeting before becoming effective.

There being no other private business, the meeting proceeded to the showing of a group of 16 mm. films of forestry interest. The first dealt with a large-scale highly-mechanised nursery of the U.S. Forest Service. This was followed by a British film "New Crop" which dealt with the establishment of new plantations and their protection. Films on forest fires in U.S.A. and on shelterbelts in the American "dust bowl" added to the variety and had a most appreciative audience.

At the conclusion of this show the President, Mr. O'Beirne thanked the Dublin Film Society for providing operators and equipment and the Royal Irish Academy for the use of the hall.
